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Career Exploration Day helps Souderton Area students get glimpse into options

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Souderton >> There are lots of things today's fifth-graders at Souderton Area School District elementary schools and Penn View Christian School could grow up to be.

Presentations by Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce members at the annual Career Exploration Day, this year held Nov. 15, showed some of the possibilities.

In teacher Laurie Reynolds' class at E. M. Crouthamel Elementary School, Chris Bencsik and Eric Moyer talked about their work at Gehman Design Remodeling and the

variety of types of jobs at the business.

The company does not build new homes, but makes repairs, additions or improvements to existing homes, Bencsik said.

"Our job is to come in and work with your mom and dad to get your house the way they want it to look," Bencsik said.

In answer to his question about remodeling work done at their homes, several of the students raised their hands to say there had been work, such as a new kitchen, cabinets, carpets or in other parts of the home.

Bencsik said the company has entry-level jobs paying minimum wage for persons just out of high school, along with skilled labor jobs, such as carpenters averaging \$20 per hour.

In teacher Doreen Hansen's class, veterinarian Dr. Sharon Minninger, of Telford Veterinary Hospital, included anecdotes of assisting police and other emergency services organizations at accidents involving animals or in searching for missing persons.

In one case, she was called in to remove a horse from its trailer after a traffic accident involving the vehicle in which the horse was being transported, she said.

The horse first had to be sedated, then lifted out.

"That actually took two veterinarians and a whole fire department," Minninger said.

“Dogs have different talents and abilities, just like people,” she said, giving as an example that therapy dogs are different from search dogs.

In response to some of the students reacting negatively when a student said they once had a rat as a pet, Minninger said, “Rats make awesome pets.”

All of the academic subjects are important in doing her job, but the two most important ones are biology and math, she said.

“All day long I do math problems,” Minninger said, giving as an example calculating the amount of medicine to give an animal based on its weight.

She also showed a large clump of cat fur that had to be removed from the animal after the owner was no longer able to take care of the pet and the hair became so matted that it was difficult for the cat to move.

“This is what happens if you never brush a pet,” Minninger said.

In teacher Jannell Stamp’s class, Souderton Area High School Assistant Principal Kyle Longacre said there are a lot of job opportunities for people who want to be teachers.

“We need good strong excellent teachers all the time,” Longacre said.

Teachers have to love all their students and those who do make a difference in people’s lives, he said.

There are 2,251 students at the high school and, on average, he goes up and down the stairs in the building about 25 times a day, he said in answer to questions from students.

The high school gives students a chance to do job shadowing at local businesses, he said.

He has visited other school districts this year in connection with a grant to the Souderton Area district from the United States Department of Agriculture, Longacre said.

“I love the schools that I’m visiting, but none are as good as here in Souderton,” he said.

The Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce’s Education Committee has been sponsoring the Career Exploration Day for a number of years, Ellen Jamison, the committee’s chairwoman, said.

Fifth grade is a good time to get the students thinking about future careers, although they won’t be making a final decision at that age, she said.

“It exposes them to different ideas and careers,” she said.

This year’s presentations included a broad range of speakers, she said.

It’s good for the speakers to get into the schools and learn more about what is happening there, she said.

“It’s a win-win, to me, for the business people and the students,” Jamison said.

Students in the high school's Pathways program also volunteered at each of the elementary schools, greeting the presenters on Career Exploration Day, escorting the presenters to classrooms and taking photos, she said.

In addition to the EMC presentations, other presenters were:

- Lucy Brubaker, Rita's Water Ice franchise owner; Tim Swartley, of Franconia Insurance & Financial Services; and Alicia Brojer, of QNB Bank, at Franconia Elementary School.
- Scott Little, of Harleysville Savings Bank; Christopher Zeledon, of Weaver, Reckner & Reinhart Dental Associates; Chris Detweiler, of Detweiler Construction Solutions Inc.' and Debra Ryan, of Penn Foundation, at Oak Ridge Elementary School.
- Mike Grassi, of I. T. Landes Co., and Tom Quinn, of Montgomery Theater, at Penn View Christian School.
- Margie Stern, of the Indian Valley Public Library; Ted Gody, Marianne Kane and Ryan Burcik, of Living Branches; and Amy Shollenberger, 4-H Extension educator, at Salford Hills Elementary School.
- Lower Salford Township police Officer Elliot Towles; Telford Borough Manager Mark Fournier; Tom McAteer, of Harleysville Savings Bank; and Brian Gourley, of Landis, Hunsberger, Gingrich & Weik LLP, at Vernfield Elementary School.
- Harry McConnell, Andrew Loeffler and Ed Varon, of Peter Becker Community; Kimberly Triol, of Brewscuits Dog Bones; Nicole Husbands, of the Indian Valley Public Library; and Thomas Celona, editor at Digital First Media, which publishes the Souderton Independent and The Reporter, at West Broad Street Elementary School.

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